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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this book is to resolve the debate between critics and defenders of the community college on three key issues: (1) the impact of the community college, not only on students but also on business and the elite universities; (2) why and how the community college developed; and (3) why the community college differentiated its originally, academic program to become strongly vocational. The book lays out the competing "state relative autonomy" perspective to help resolve the debate. He explains that, as a consequence of its diverse origins, the community college is a hybrid institution, combining many different and often contradictory purposes. As a doorway to educational opportunity, a vendor of vocational training, a protector of university selectivity, and a defender of state higher education budgets, the community college has become quite eclectic. Such eclecticism can breed synergy. But in the community college's case it has sown contradiction. The institution's desire to provide baccalaureate aspirants with educational opportunity has been undercut by its other purposes of providing vocational training and saving state governments money. The book's findings on the causes of the community college's origins and vocationalization suggest new directions for scholarship on educational change, politics of education, and political sociology. (JA)

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